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October 17, 2000

Enclosed is my story of my life during the war.

Rose Doery

Rose Doery

PII Redacted

I am recording the following story so Ryan, Michele, Danny, Joey, Laurie and Thomas should know what happened during the Second World War which started in 1940 and lasted till 1945.

This is your Oma. I was born by the name of Roza Hartz in 1926, ages and ages ago, on September 19th in Amsterdam, Holland. My father had a grocery store in the Kerkstraat 391. If you should ever go to Amsterdam you could look it up. Before the war broke out in 1940 my parents even bought the whole house with the store in it. Of course they had to take a mortgage out at the bank.

Well, I had a very happy childhood with a best friend next door, Tootje. Her parents had a store too, a few houses away. We always played in the street, with marbles or jump rope, hopscotch, hide 'n seek, or whatever. We were known as Rootje and Tootje. She belonged to a Catholic family, not that that mattered in the least. Only it felt creepy when I was invited to her house at Christmas with all that Jesus stuff around. You see, even though my parents were not religious, my grandparents were. For their sake I was sent to a Jewish school. On weekends I stayed with my grandparents for the Friday night meal and then on Saturday morning I had to go to the Shul (Synagogue) with my Opa. To tell you the truth I hated it because I knew that my parents were having fun without me. Sometimes I overheard that they'd gone to a the-dansant (a dancing), or a movie. It was never openly discussed because of me and my big mouth. On Sjabbos (Saturday) one is not supposed to touch money.

To give you an example of my big mouth: On Passover the Jews are supposed to eat matzos, but in my house we ate bread in the morning and

1925 Abram & Celien (Sara) HARTZ in front of their own grocerystore

Abram's brother, Joop, getting married to Rebecca

Left little flower-girl is Roza ± 1931

1932 Roza & her parents in Zandvoort

for lunch we had the matzos. Because at lunch somebody of the family might walk in. Anyway, we liked to eat the matzos. But as I said, in the morning we had bread and on this particular morning I must have been very hungry because I had 8 slices of bread with butter and chocolate flakes. My mother looked at me in amazement, like where does she put it all. She also made the mistake to remind me that it was a secret. That afternoon I was going to my Oma's house and all the way I am telling myself not to tell the secret. It was about a 15 minute walk and then 3 flights of stairs and I arrive out of breath and blurted out: "Guess how many slices of bread I had this morning!" OOPS, I'd done it. I'd betrayed my parents.

I don't remember my grandparents ever being mad with me. For a long time I was their only grandchild. It was not just my Oma and Opa who spoiled me but my father had two unmarried sisters, Alida and Betsy, who lived at home. There was also one younger brother, Joop. I was a flowergirl at his wedding. He had one daughter and her name was exactly the same as mine. We were named after the same grandmother. In general, life was very pleasant for me.

The very few times that I was not sent off to my grandparents I remember fondly. My father would go to the barber for a shave and when he came home, he looked all white from the powder and he was proud on how smooth his skin was. He made me feel it by putting his cheek against mine. I still remember how nice he smelled then. Then we would go downtown". My father dressed nicely with a Homburg hat and I'd walk in the middle between my Papa and Mama. To the Bijenkorf, a department store, where they would buy something for me and then to a cafe where I

could choose a pastry from a cart that was being wheeled around. It was a real feast for me. I was an only child till I was 9 and then I got a baby brother. I had asked my mother for a sister, but it seemed like she had not paid any attention to me.

The way I talked of my grandparents you'd think I had an awful time there, which wasn't true. My aunts always played games with me. "Mens Erger Je Niet" (Don't aggravate yourself) was one of my favorites. Sunday nights I spent with my mother's parents and Oma Zilverberg taught me all kinds of card games. Opa Z. always wore a hat, in the house too. When I asked him why he was wearing a hat, his response was always, "because my feet are cold". He was sort of a comedian. During the day on Sunday I had to stay around the store in case somebody would call for a delivery. That was my job to go with my bike, hoping that I'd get a tip.

I have wonderful memories about the holidays, especially Passover. It was always celebrated at Oma Hartz's house and the Zilverbergs were there too. Lots of food and wine and the traditional sedermeal was served. Opa Z had a wonderful voice and after he was boosted with the wine he'd sing till he was red in the face. Everybody else sang also and me being the youngest I had to recite the Questions in Hebrew. They all applauded and told me how well I'd done that and all in all it was just a wonderful and warm event. Everybody being happy. Even though as a child I thought this meal took too long, I'm very grateful now to have had this experience and feel sorry for my children for never having experienced this.

At Hanukah we'd sit around the table and somebody would knock. All eyes were turned to me. "Roza, did you hear that knocking? I think the

Hanukah man must have brought something. You'd better start looking". They did not have to say that twice. They guided me along by saying that I was cold or hot or lukewarm. That went on for 8 days. I always would find something little. They were by no means rich, better said, they were poor.

My mother's family consisted of her parents, one sister and one brother. Her sister, Tante Fie, was married to Ome Sanny and they had three sons. All three around my age. Ome Sanny had a very good business and made oodles of money which he knew how to spend also. They lived well and traveled a lot. Since Tante Fie only had boys she was very good to me and most of the time when the boys were going somewhere I came along. That's how I got to go to Flims in Switzerland twice in the wintertime and learned how to ski and skate. On shorter trips in Holland itself I usually had to be let out of the car before we left Amsterdam. I got carsick. The second winter that I was going to Switzerland my mother saw me off at the railroad station and she made me nervous when the train was about to leave, she was still on the train. Well, to my surprise she was coming too. Claire, the nanny was otherwise the only one to accompany us. It was great to have my mother come too. Ome Sanny and Tante Fie played an important role in our survival. All through our camp years he was "Our Guardian Angel." He was the most generous man I've ever met.

On May 10, 1940, after bombing Rotterdam, the Germans marched into Holland and took over. That was the end of our peace. I was about the age of what you are now, about 13 years old and I remember the Germans marching through the streets and the Dutch people cheering them on Heil Hitler, Heil Hitler and I would run back to the store and hide because it was

TANTE FIE AND HER THREE SONS, Japie, Simon, Sander

JAPIE SIMON HARTZ

scary. Especially to see the Dutch people siding with the Germans. It was very scary. My father told me that I had no business being out there.

On the 14th of May the Royal Family fled to England and we felt really abandoned.

From now on I might mix up on the dates because things happened so fast -- one thing after another. I guess it was 1941 when the Germans walked into my father's store, sent the customers outside and locked the door. Told my father to get away from the counter and told him that he could not operate the store any more. It was now theirs and we could not touch anything that was in the store or in the basement where we had all our supplies. On the door to the basement they put a lock so we would not be able to get at anything. In the middle of the night, my father would lower himself from the balcony above the cellar and let himself in through a window. He could not make any noise, because of neighbors. You did not know whom to trust or not to trust. My father's expertise was the dutch cheeses. They were on shelves in the cellar and they had to be turned over every so often. For these cheeses he risked going down and taking them out. We would bring them to the family. We continued living behind the store so it was very hard. I don't even remember how we did it. My father had to go to a work camp that was located in Holland.

The next thing: in the school we got forms to fill out and we had to write down how many Jewish grandparents we had. I wrote down 4. About a week later everybody who had 4 Jewish grandparents was considered full Jewish and had to leave the school and go to different schools in the ghetto (a special part of Amsterdam for just the Jews). So I

Opa Hartz + Tante Betsy

Roza in 1940

my namesake – She did not survive

went to another school. Next we had to wear the yellow star with the word "JOOD" written on it so that everybody could see that we were Jewish. We had to sew them on all our clothes. Then we couldn't go to the movies anymore, we couldn't enter restaurants, cafes, parks, etc. -- everything was forbidden for Jews. Big signs were all over "VERBODEN VOOR JODEN" (Forbidden for Jews). The radio, there was no television yet, the comedians, they had a big time making fun of the Jews and saying nasty things and making songs how we were all going to be killed. It was funny for them but not for us as you can imagine.

In 1942 in July -- it was the end of the school year and a lot of the Jewish people who were single and who were born in 1926 or before had to report for concentration camp. The German-born single people of the same age group were first summoned. I was born in 1926 so I had to report too. My mother didn't want me to go. I had to go, my aunts had to go (they were both single sisters of my father) -- Tante Betsy and Tante Alida, they wanted me to come with them so that they could keep an eye on me but my mother wouldn't let me. We looked for all kinds of ways how I could get out of it. (By the way, these two aunts never did come back.)

We went to our general physician and we tried to find some sickness. He said I could maybe get away with appendicitis because I had had an attack of appendicitis a couple of years before. He told us to find a surgeon and when the surgeon would examine me I should say "Ouch, it hurts when you touch me here" and at a different spot I should say "No, this does not hurt." So we looked for a surgeon all day long in Amsterdam and most of them slammed the door in our face because they knew why we were there.

In the evening we found a doctor who let us in and he examined me. I went through my act and he decided that I had acute appendicitis with a fever. He called one hospital after another. They were all full. Finally he did find a hospital that still had a bed and I had to go straight there. The next morning the doctor came by and examined me again. I went dutifully through my act again. He bent over me and whispered "Did you really think you could fool me?" Well, I was operated on my appendix -- whether it was needed or not, it was done, and while I was in the hospital I couldn't report for concentration camp. After the operation the doctor came by and said "Young lady, it was a good thing that we got that appendix out. It was really diseased. He might have said that to save his skin, I don't know and will never know.

While I was in the hospital my mother had a friend who got a job for me working for the Whermacht, sewing on buttons on uniforms. While I was working on that job it temporarily exempted me from going to a concentration camp, so that's what happened.

We had neighbors who asked us for our beautiful carpet, "why should we leave it behind for the Germans? They could use it".....

On October 2, 1942, a date that will never leave my memory, at about 12:30 AM we were woken up by hard banging and bell ringing. There were just my mother, my brother who was 6 years old and me who was 16. I had barely turned 16. My mother was too scared to go out of bed to open the door, so I said that I'd open the door. I went downstairs and opened the door and there were a German and a Dutchman. They said we had to be ready in a half hour and come with them. They stood around

while we got ready. Got my brother up sleeping. Had to get him dressed. I got the feeling that the German was more sympathetic, maybe he had children of his own -- I don't know. The Dutchman was rude and told us to hurry up and get ready. We had our backpacks ready because we knew it was coming one of these days so we had them packed and we were ready in about 1/2 hour.

We only had one request to get permission to make a phone call so we could let my mother's sister, Tante Fie, and Ome Sanny know what happened to us and they granted it. Already for a long time we could not use our own telephone. It was disconnected. Therefore I went to my neighbor which was my best girlfriend, Tootje, -all through my life -- all 15 years and rang her bell. She had told me that if we needed them they would of course help us and we could use their phone in case it happened. I rang the bell, and rang the bell and banged on the door and shouted her name and nobody opened the door. I knew she had a sister who was sympathetic to the Germans and maybe she told them not to open the door. But other neighbors heard the noise and they asked us what happened and I said that I just wanted to use the phone to call my aunt and they opened the door and let me use the phone and make the call.

Then we went. We walked with our captors to the southern part of Amsterdam where we were put into a school. I don't even remember the details, but they had rounded up thousands and thousands of Jews in Amsterdam (15,000). They were all put together in that same schoolhouse. Then we were put on a train to Hooghalen where we had to get off the train and walk the rest of the way that was about an hour's walk maybe, to

Westerbork. Westerbork was called the Durchgangslager, meaning a transient camp. From there the trains were going to Poland. We walked and walked till we couldn't carry our backpacks any longer and had to leave them on the side of the road. Japie had to be carried. My mother carried him, I carried him, we took turns. We were tired, we had missed a whole night of sleep, and it was just horrible, horrendous. When we arrived in Westerbork together with thousands and thousands of people from all parts of Holland we got together with my father. My brother remembers that we did not find him till a week later. He was brought there too. And I remember we had to stand in lines and I had diarrhea and didn't know where to go. It was more than horrendous. I can't even remember. I don't want to remember but you can imagine. It wasn't just me. Thousands of people with nervous stomachs. Nobody can imagine but I'll try to tell you any way. Everybody was waiting to be registered and to get a barrack assignment. Then also we had to find our backpacks that we left on the side of the road. You can imagine that that was not so easy.

We were put up in a barrack, barrack #63, that I remember. All four of us together again so that was a good thing. The men on one side of the barrack, the women on the other. Japie, my brother, was with us and we had 3 decker beds and I always got the top one which I liked. Nobody on top of me and I could use the rafters to store my personal belongings. When I had to dress or undress I made sort of a tent so nobody would see me. After the war I met a man who had stayed in the same barrack and he told me how intrigued he was with the way I handled my undressing.

I should mention that in the meantime while we were in the camp - when we first came in the camp - my uncle went to work for us to try his best to save us. He got himself introduced to the commandant of Westerbork. His name was De Haan. He was a Dutch guy (originally German) but he lived in Holland in my uncles neighborhood. Ome Sanny knew the guy liked to drink a lot and since my uncle had a beautiful wine cellar he bribed him with the wine. The guy promised to take our names out of the card file so we would be pretty safe in Westerbork. We could stay there as long as he could protect us and that's what happened. We stayed in Westerbork from October 2nd, 1942 until February 1944 so it was a pretty long time.

In the meantime life went on and we went to concerts because a lot of the artists from the Concertgebouw orchestra were Jewish and weretransported to Westerbork and they had to play. They set up an orchestra and played for the German officers and all German personnel. There were always plenty of seats left for the Jews that would like to come. I used to have dates to go to the concerts. It was my introduction to classical music and boys. One in particular. His name was Emil and I looked up to him like a prince. He lived in the same barrack as we did. The first time I met him was at the waterpump. He offered to carry my pail for me. He was all of 17 years, so to me he was an older man. We became really good friends and one day he told me to give him a kiss which I did. I gave him a peck on the cheek. Not that way, he said. Well, that was my introduction. He asked for an address in Amsterdam where I'd be after the war. I gave him my Aunt's address in the Holbeinstraat. He took me often

to the concerts. He was more familiar with the classical music than I at that time.

My parents never went. I guess most mature people did not go. It did not feel right to go to a concert knowing that the trains would leave with friends, family and fellow Jews. On Monday the train would arrive and sit there till the next night. Every Tuesday, a train with cattle cars would leave from Westerbork to go to Poland with up to 2500 people, old, young, sick, mothers with babies and children all by themselves. All told, 93 trains left Westerbork taking people to the East.

In the middle of the night the Germans marched into the barracks with a list of names. If your name was called you had to get dressed and go to the train. As soon as they passed the H - our name was Hartz - we let out a sigh of relief. We were safe again for another week. It was selfish of us. It was hard enough to say good-bye to friends and family who were not as lucky as we were. Only once the Germans marched in and told the whole barrack to get dressed and come. They didn't call names - the whole barrack had to be emptied out and go to the train. So then we were in a real pickle. We got hold of a messenger that we saw running around and we told him to go to Mr. DeHaan, the Commandant, and tell Mr. DeHaan that we were on the train. Well the messenger came back before the train was leaving and told us to come off by strict orders from the Commandant. We had to come off the train and see him.

So we were saved again and we started to feel pretty secure in Westerbork. We all had our jobs to do. My father had to clean the barracks, my mother had to peel potatoes in the kitchen and I worked as an

ordinance (messenger) in the hospital. We got together at night - my family - we were sitting at the same table with other people of course and I made friends there. My little brother found himself a little girl with blond curly hair who played with him under the table. I still remember her name, Irene.

One day a transport came from Amsterdam - my grandparents were there and we couldn't do anything about keeping them - because we were lucky that they kept us but we couldn't help - it was terrible. A lot of crying and holding each other. I remember looking at my grandmother's facial hair. I had never seen that before. She had always seemed so perfect to me. Only now it occurs to me that she had completely depended on Alida to help her get dressed and groomed. Then my mother's father came (he was a widower; luckily my grandmother had died of cancer in 1938) and he was sent on and we saw all these people, friends, and my uncle, my cousin, everyone came through - we saw them all.

But by February 1944 our time was up also and we had to leave and go to Bergen-Belsen which was a privilege in itself compared to Poland. Tante Fie had sold a wide bracelet that she had (full of diamonds) because for fl. 130,000 we would get a certain stamp so that we would be exchangeable for a German prisoner of war or whatever. We could go to Bergen-Belsen for the money that they had deposited. But I still couldn't believe that our time had come. I was hoping, hoping, hoping, that somebody would bomb the rails so that the train couldn't leave. I didn't want to leave Holland. I was desperate to stay in Holland where I had felt relatively safe all this time, but nothing happened and we went over the

border and I thought "THIS IS IT". I was so depressed. THIS IS IT, THIS IS IT! Now we are in the lions' den, in Germany. And the Dutch people let us go out - nobody helped us, we were abandoned completely. We arrived in Bergen-Belsen and when the train stopped there were soldiers with rifles and big dogs like every 6 feet apart and they shouted for us to hurry up and hurry up and then we went inside a gate of the camp. Well, I thought, THIS IS IT! , now they throw a bomb on the camp and good-bye to all of us. But it wasn't that easy.

We were all put on a big place - a big square (an Appelplatz) where we had to line up. They were looking they said for nurses. They needed nurses for the hospital - so a few nurses stepped forward and then I thought "why not. I'll give it a try." I was 17 years old and I was by no means a nurse but I thought I could work in a hospital again. So I stepped forward and the Germans said lets take the "hupche" - which meant take the cute one - that was me. So I got the job in the hospital. Anyway there was not much nursing that you could do - it was just cleaning the potties and washing the people and helping them. Well I liked it and I didn't have to be working in a factory with the Germans standing over me. Of course, there was more to the job that cleaning potties and people. When they died we had to wrap them up and bring the bodies outside. My shift was from 7:00 PM till 7:00 AM. And we would just be praying that whoever was dying would do so after 7:00 AM. It was very hard to make yourself so cold and detached. But it was a means of self-preservation. I was only 17 years old at the time.

At that time I also became a witness to a woman giving birth. Somehow there was no light and she was lying on the floor. I guess they

used candles or matches to see by. She was screaming and I thought to myself that I'll never have children if that's the way it goes. After the baby was born the doctor turned to me and told me to tell my mother that it wasn't true about the stork. It was incomprehensible to see that little human being brought into these terrible circumstances.

While I was working I used to have a low-grade temperature constantly. Sometimes I was told to stay in bed for a couple of days, but as soon as I was up and about my temperature would rise again. At one point I got very yellow and was diagnosed with jaundice. Then I really had to stay in bed.

It was not always that I was working in the hospital. If I only could remember what the other things were that I had to do. I can see myself marching with a group but can't recollect where we were going or what my part was. I recall one soldier, quite young, who was always with our group. I tried to make eye contact with him but he would always stare ahead, never smiling. Once I had to go to the bathroom which was outside, I passed him. I had not taken 2 steps away from the barrack when he grabbed me by the arm and pulled me inside. Out of nowhere a plane had come down and was shooting at anything that moved. He'd saved my life, but even after that he was the same as before. I always wondered about that boy. He looked like he'd witnessed more than he could comprehend.

My mother had to work in sort of a factory where they had to pull shoes apart. My father had to do that too. I know once my mother was taking care of my father's wounds in his back. They had hit him with clubs because he wasn't fast enough unloading a truck with old shoes. I was

spared a lot of things and my brother was taken care of by some women who took care of the children. A Kapo (Pole) hit my mother with a club three times when she was hanging some laundry on the barbed wire. My little brother was a witness to that event. The Kapos had an even worse reputation than the Germans. These were criminals who were put in charge of us. She was badly hurt because all of her life she had to wear a corset with iron in it to hold her back straight.

One thing about Bergen-Belsen, it didn't have crematoria (furnaces for the burning of corpses). We still didn't know that people were actually killed in Auschwitz. We always heard rumors and called the source the "IPA" (Israelis Press Agency). Nobody wanted to believe that something like that really could happen. But in Bergen-Belsen people were killed in different ways, by beatings, and not feeding us enough. We had one piece of bread for the week and we got twice a day turnip soup - it was more water and a few pieces of turnip which turns your stomach really. People got diarrhea and dysentery and died anyway. Mostly the big strong men - they died first, then the other men, then the women started to go. That went on for about a year or more. I usually tried to trade my soup for a piece of bread.

We all had to take showers together and had to leave our clothes in one room and then walk over to where the showers were, naked. We all had a little piece of towel and everybody covered different parts of their bodies while walking past the soldiers who were watching us take showers. It was quite humiliating. I also remember feeling relieved when the water came out of the spouts and not gas. (There were these vague rumors about gas

showers. Just too difficult to comprehend). After the war we found out that all these vague rumors were all too true.

I remember when my 18th birthday came around how depressed I was and how immature. My whole life whenever I wanted to do something, my mother always said "Wait till you're 18", that was for wearing lipstick, going out, dancing, or whatever I wanted at that moment, it was always the same answer "Wait till you're 18". So now I was 18 and where was all the magic that would happen when I become 18. I lashed out at my mother, like it would be her fault that we were in a concentration camp. I know it upset her very much and I thought "good, let it upset her, she deserves it". I remember this now while I am writing this. We never discussed this after the war and now it is too late. My mother died in 1968 at the age of 67 in Chicago.

One day while I was working in the hospital I had a sore throat. I told another nurse (a friend of mine, Alice) and she advised me to see a doctor. I told her "het gaat wel over voor dat ik een jongetje ben" (this is something that my mother told me whenever I complained of a hurt here or there. It means, it will pass before you become a boy). While we are walking down a corridor a Greek (Jewish) doctor (the same one who was at the birth of the baby) passed us and Alice told him to take a look in my throat. "Well, young lady, I'll have to separate you because you have diphtheria." So I had to go straight in the hospital in isolation and I got injections and was told to lie flat and not move. Not get out of bed or do anything.

The next thing I knew, I think the same day or the next morning - there was a big commotion in the camp - everybody had to go to the trains - sick people - everybody - because the Americans had come to Hamburg and the Russians were coming from the other side and they wanted to evacuate Bergen-Belsen. I found my parents, and we got into the same cattle car. My father was just bones. He was sore on his back from lying and the skin was all open, his feet were swollen with edema and here he had to lie in the middle of the cattle car. Everybody was sitting against the walls but nobody could really stretch their legs because my father was lying in the middle. I remember a pompous man sitting opposite us and saying "Wir achten der Herr Hartz sehr about so geht es nicht weiter". ("We respect Mr. Hartz very much but it can't go on like this.")

We were two weeks going back and forth in that train. Needless to say there was no food or water. At one point they (?) were shooting at the train. The diving planes came down and they were shooting at the train. The doors were being opened and everybody flew out into the fields and tried to hide. I remember the screams from my brother that went through marrow and bone, how he screamed - he was so frightened. We came to Berlin and the train stopped in the station. Again the doors were opened There was that other train sitting next to ours and we went investigating. My mother felt into something and it happened to be honey and we were all licking her fingers. My brother found butter. It was very dangerous what we were doing, and at one point the Germans were shooting at Japie, my brother. It was about the only food that we had during these two weeks.

The Russians were coming close; the Americans were coming close. The Germans didn't know what to do with us - with that the train was going steadily eastward. Finally my father died - three days before the liberation. His body was put on the side of the train in the ditch. The pompous man could stretch his legs. The name of the town was Shipkau (?). We went on and three days later the Russians overtook us and the Germans had to get off the train and put down their weapons and march off with the Russians. That was the best sight we'd seen in a long time.

We were left to our own devices. The Jewish people - they were all very skinny, sickly and hungry, a motley group (what I really want to say is a Nebbish group) - got out of the train and started walking to the next village. We just followed and the first ones just occupied the houses that were empty. The German people probably had run away. By the time we came we were sharing a room with so many other people and lying on the floor but we were free at least. I mean the realization didn't hit us really - my father had just died and people were still dying all over the place. I had diphtheria still but had forgotten about it because I couldn't take care of it anyway. One after the other we got typhus. My mother and I must have overlapped with the disease because we were both hallucinating about the same things. Mostly it was about my uncle visiting us and bringing cans of Delmonte peaches. We would be discussing his visits.

During that time we heard that the Russians were raping the women. When they came to our door and wanted to come in we told them through the closed door that we all had TYPHUS and that made them go away. The doctor who made the rounds stood at a safe distance from us, but after a few

visits, we heard that he'd caught the disease and had died. Finally I must have been really bad, I was put on a stretcher and brought to the hospital. There the Russians shaved my head. The lice which were nested in the hair spread the disease. It was terribly upsetting to me. I thought now that **this** is the worst thing that ever happened to me. It was not like now the 90's when it is fashionable to have a shaven head but at that time at age 19 it was pretty terrible. I got better, my mother got better, my brother got better.

The hallucinations I had during my sickness had made quite an impression on me and I was afraid that I'd never be "normal" again. When I came "home" after the hospital the people who stayed in our room, promised to make a real nice lunch for my homecoming. They told me what they'd bought and when the table was set, I looked at it and became hysterical. Crying, saying that I was still sick. When I finally said why I cried, they laughed and said that they'd forgotten to put that item on the table. Maybe it was baloney and I looked for it and was sure that they'd said it but it wasn't there. It was a weird feeling.

Finally we were returned to Holland on Red Cross trucks. The Americans gave us cans of vegetables or soup that we just ate out of the can cold and it was delicious. Our first stop was in Eindhoven, Holland. The Red Cross received us and we were sprayed with DDT. They also outfitted me with a pair of shoes - that was size 39, man-size - it was like 3 sizes too big but I felt great. I had leather shoes on my feet - it was wonderful.

In Amsterdam we were welcomed by our Guardian Angel, who was waiting for us at Het Centraal Station. I remember the happy surprise on my uncle's face that I was there too. There had been long lists of all the

JAPIE & ROZA in 1945. Note the shoes

people who had died, and they'd seen my father's name on the list. On the lists of people who were returning they saw only my mother and my brother. There was no mention of me - but I was there.

We went to my aunt's house and we stayed there for maybe eight months till we found our own apartment. There was no possibility to get our own house back. When we failed in our payments because we were taken to a concentration camp, the bank took the house and sold it again.

One day my brother who was 9 years old by that time - had stolen some cookies from the closet and hid them in his pocket and brought them upstairs to our bedroom. "Look what I have organized here." It was a big deal for him that he had stolen those cookies and it was funny. It was sad and funny. He had to start school from the first grade on, but he got caught up very fast. He cannot claim, as I did, for having had a happy childhood.

In the meantime in Holland all the Dutch girls who had affairs with the German soldiers, were taken from their houses and in the open squares on the street their heads were shaven to humiliate them. So I was in one class with them. They would pass me and they would wink at me like I was one of them. My cousin, Simon, once was in a fight over me. Some fellows passed us and then started yelling "Moffenhoer" over and over. I'd never seen him so upset. (The Germans were nicknamed "Moffen" in Holland, and "hoer" is pronouced the same as the English, "whore"). Once I was waiting for the tram, somebody reached out and pulled the kerchief right off my head. I always had a kerchief or a turban on my head to hide the baldness. But he pulled it off and I felt terrible, terrible.

One day my aunt called me to say that she sees a boy coming down the street, looking at the housenumbers, and she thinks it will be for me. Whatever gave her that idea I don't know. But the next thing I knew was that the bell rang. My heart was in my throat when I opened the door. It was indeed for me. It was Emil, the one I was waiting for. He was alive! He was here! I was deliriously happy. He didn't care about my hair. He was shaven too. He'd been in Auschwitz and survived. We went for a walk. I didn't realize that there was something he wanted to tell me, maybe because I did not let him. For me everything would continue with us like it had been in the camp. He promised to come back the next week. You see, he lived in Maastricht, in Limburg. It was quite far. Well, the next week came and went and the next after that, and so on, and no Emil. I was sad and cried a lot. My uncle asked me what was the matter with me and I blurted out that Emil had promised to come back but he did not. My uncle was quite blunt saying that Emil had told him that he was engaged to be married in Maastricht. With that news I ran up to my room and cried my heart out.

Time marched on and my hair grew back very curly and nice. My aunt wanted to find out what I wanted to do as a job and I told her that I wanted to work in a hospital. She talked me out of it saying that I had seen enough misery for a lifetime. Also the hours would be irregular and that would not fit in with the way the household was run. Six o'clock was dinner time and that meant six, not five minutes later or earlier. As I was a guest in their house I left it up to her, so when she told me that her hairdresser was looking for a girl to train, I went with her and got the job.

My aunt was a good customer and went every day just to have her hair combed and set.

Thus, I became sort of an assistant hairdresser. My job was to wash the people's hair, set the curlers in for a permanent, comb the hair out, and I was taught to manicure nails. After about one year of doing that, I wanted to change jobs. My back was always aching. At least that was the excuse I gave. Through Vitamin C (an expression from the camps, meaning having connections) I got a job in the Archives of "Het Parool", the local newspaper. That was much more interesting.